

Red Flag Warnings / Fire Weather Watches: NWS Aberdeen issues Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches as appropriate for the counties in its fire weather service area. Appropriate fire weather products will contain a statement as to the impact of such warnings/watches on the applicable fire weather zones.

The Red Flag program is a means by which the weather forecaster informs the land management agencies of the combination of dry fuels and critical weather conditions that support extreme fire behavior. Identification of Red Flag events is a primary responsibility of the forecaster producing the Fire Weather Planning Forecasts. A **Red Flag Warning** informs agencies of the imminent or actual occurrence of Red Flag conditions. A Red Flag Warning will be issued when there is high confidence that Red Flag criteria will be met within the next 24 hours, or when those criteria are already being met or exceeded. A warning may be issued for all, or portions of a fire weather zone or region. A **Fire Weather Watch** alerts agencies to the high potential for development of a Red Flag event in the 12-72 hours. **A watch may only be issued (or continued) in the first 12-hour time period for dry thunderstorm events.** The watch may be issued for all, or portions of a fire weather zone or region.

a) Criteria – The criteria for issuing of Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings in the Rocky Mountain Area are a combination of weather and fuels conditions (as determined by fire management) for any 3 hours or more in a 12 hour period. These criteria are defined as the following:

1. Fuel characteristics are favorable for large fire growth as determined by fire management using the Red Flag Fuels Support Page:

http://www.blm.gov/colorado/rmafwx/fuel_status/public/index.php

Note: It is the responsibility of Land Agencies to maintain and update the Red Flag Fuels Support Page. The fuel condition within the support page will default to “Yes” if the assigned FMO or Fuel Specialist fails to update the fuel condition within a 7-Day period.

2. Wind and Relative Humidity criteria

Wind: Gusts of 25 mph or greater for all fire weather zones.

-AND-

RH: 20% or lower (zones SD267, SD268, SD269, SD270, SD271)...
25% or lower (zones SD272, SD273, MN039, MN046)

3. Dry thunderstorms (15% coverage or more, constituting an LAL 6)

Additional Red Flag Factors: In addition to the basic criteria above, a combination of other elements may result in Red Flag conditions. Haines Index of 5 or 6, wind shifts associated with cold frontal passages, significant wind shifts, microburst winds, first significant lightning (wet or dry, 15% coverage of thunderstorms or more) event after an extended hot and dry period, and poor RH recovery. **Note:** *The decision to issue a Fire Weather Watch or Red Flag Warning can be difficult and complicated at times. Coordination with neighboring NWS offices and Land Agencies will play a vital role in the final decision.*

After issuing a Fire Weather Watch or a Red Flag Warning call the Great Plains Dispatch Center in Rapid City 1-605-393-8017.

An example of a Red Flag Warning from WSOM 10-401

Overview Headline(s) - general headline statement(s) that summarizes the Fire Weather threat, time of development, reason for issuance, and area affected.

Example:

...RED FLAG WARNING FROM 2PM TO 7PM MST FOR STRONG WINDS AND LOW HUMIDITY FOR SOUTHEAST OREGON...

***...RED FLAG WARNING FROM 1PM CDT TO 7PM CDT FOR
STRONG WINDS AND LOW HUMIDITY FOR CENTRAL SOUTH
DAKOTA...***

General Discussion - a brief, non-technical discussion of the expected fire weather event.